

CLAIMS

1. Apparatus for transfer of containers between land-based vehicles and a dockside location, comprising: wheeled conveyor means positioned at said dockside location for providing thereat three parallel spaced passage lanes; roller track means extending through the conveyor means for supported movement of the containers along one of the passage lanes disposed between the other two of the passage lanes; and spreader means mounted on the conveyor means for lateral guided displacement of the containers between said one of the passage lanes established by the roller track means and the other two passage paths along which the land-based vehicles may travel without obstruction.

2. The apparatus as defined in claim 1, wherein said conveyor means is formed by a central crane unit interconnected between opposite end crane units on which said container spreader means is mounted; and alignment guide means mounted on the central crane unit for operative positioning of the conveyor means at said dockside location.

3. The apparatus as defined in claim 2, wherein said opposite end crane units respectively extend laterally beyond the central crane unit to establish the other two passage lanes extending therethrough.

4. Apparatus for transfer of containers between land-based vehicles and a dockside location, comprising: wheeled conveyor means positioned at said dockside location for providing thereat three parallel spaced passage lanes; and roller track means extending through the conveyor means for supported movement of the containers along one of the passage lanes disposed between the

other two of the passage lanes; said opposite crane units respectively extending laterally beyond the central crane unit to establish the other two passage lanes therethrough.

5. The apparatus as defined in claim 3, including hopper guide means mounted on the central crane unit for vertical transfer of the containers to and from the conveyor means at said dockside location.

6. A method for transfer of containers between land-based vehicles and a dockside location, comprising the steps of: positioning a common track passage lane of predetermined length along which the containers are moved; establishing two parallel spaced passage lanes on opposite sides of the positioned common track passage lane along which the land-based vehicles may approach and depart without obstruction; laterally transferring the containers between the land-based vehicles and the positioned common track passage lane at longitudinally spaced locations thereon; and transferring the containers to and from the positioned common track passage lane in a vertical direction at said dockside location thereon between said longitudinally spaced locations.

7. The method as defined in claim 6, wherein said land-based vehicles are trucks having chassis on which the containers are carried; and said transferring of the containers in the vertical direction being effect through a marine terminal crane at the dockside location.